The Middlebury Campus

Since 1905

Vol. CXIX, No. 21 | April 29, 2021 | middleburycampus.com

ZEITGEIST 2021

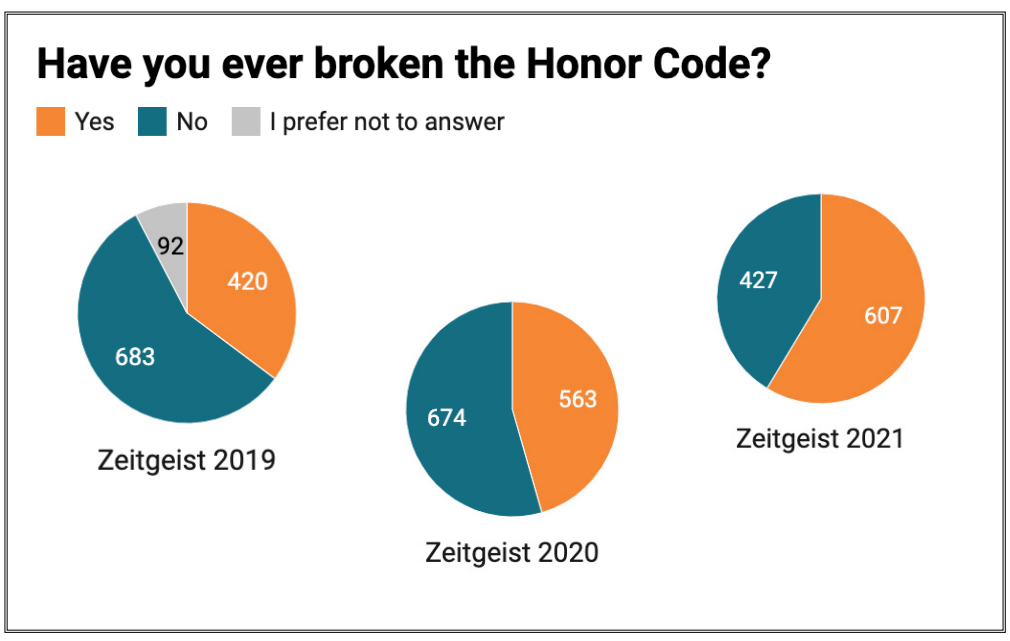
By HANNAH BENSEN
Senior Data Editor

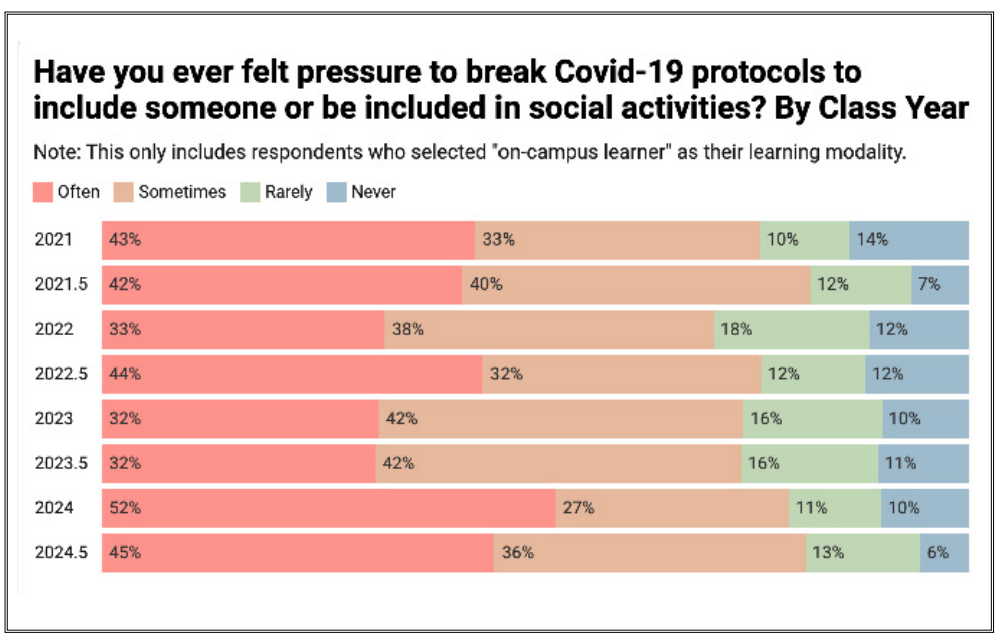
The pandemic introduced a new variable to our data this year, one that fundamentally shifted the rhythm of Middlebury students' existence. While previous Zeitgeist surveys asked students about belonging and how identities coalesce, this year we pondered what tethers Middlebury students together — even when we've been asked to keep our distance.

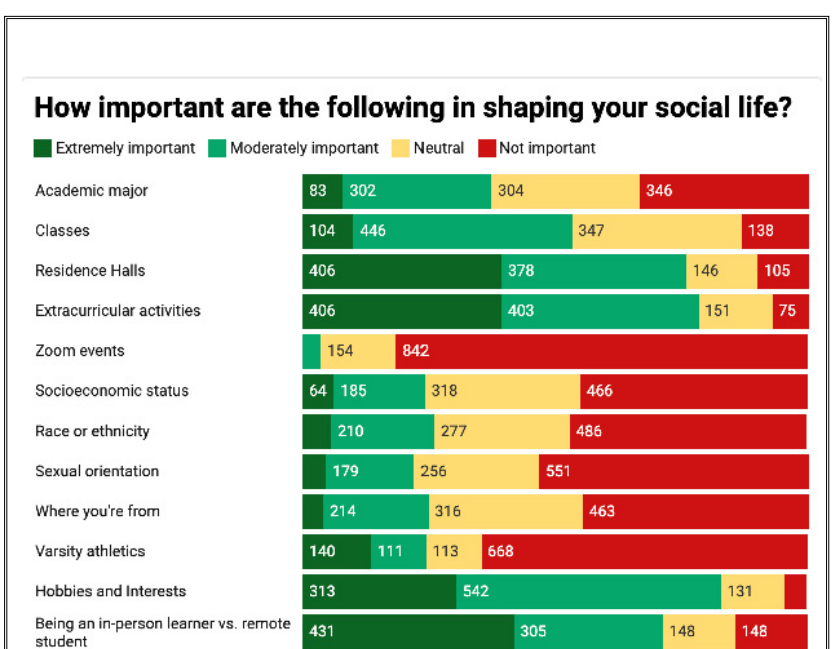
Separated by masks and unable to congregate in the ways we know, it can be difficult to get a read on the pulse of the Middlebury community. Did the policies enacted to protect our physical health affect our interpersonal relationships? How many hours per day do students spend looking at a screen? Has the pandemic changed sexual behavior? Does Middlebury feel like home?

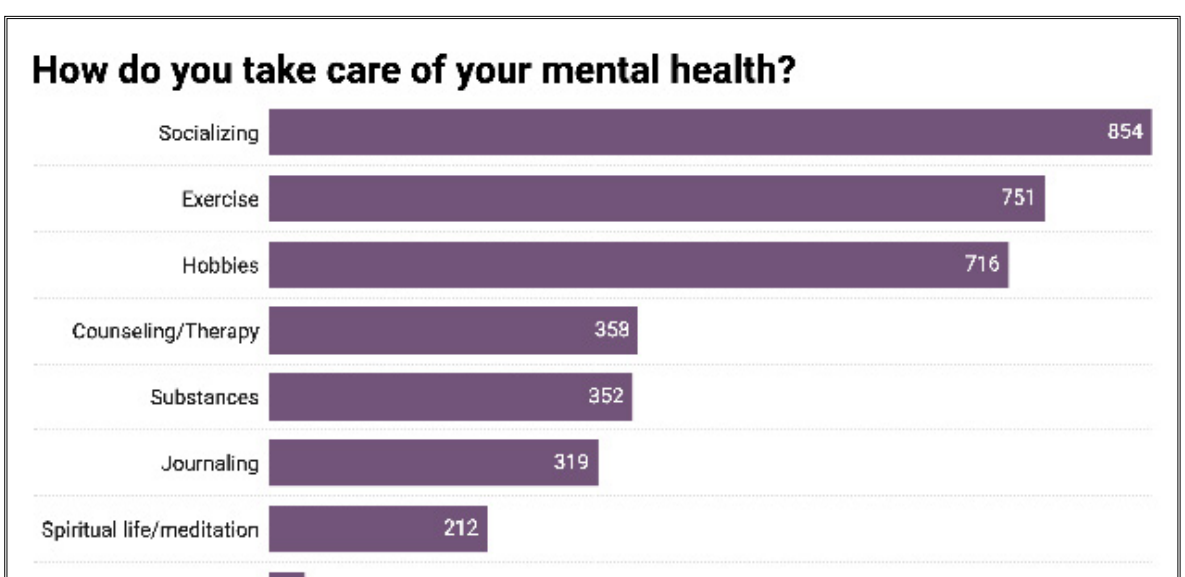
In the third annual Zeitgeist survey, a project that interweaves data and the written word to paint a picture of life at Middlebury, our theme is "connection." With a 43% response rate, the results represent a cross-section of the student experience, though some student voices — namely students of color — are underrepresented in these results.

Though the struggles of this year have been collective, every individual has learned, languished, and lost differently. As a world beyond the pandemic seems more possible than ever, we hope these Zeitgeist results provide insight about what we should carry into a post-pandemic Middlebury — and the things we should leave behind.




Have you ever felt pressure to break Covid-19 protocols to include someone or be included in social activities? By Class Year
Note: This only includes respondents who selected "on-campus learner" as their learning modality.
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
2021 43% 33% 10% 14%
2021.5 42% 40% 12% 7%
2022 33% 38% 18% 12%
2022.5 44% 32% 12% 12%
2023 32% 42% 16% 10%
2023.5 32% 42% 16% 11%
2024 52% 27% 11% 10%
2024.5 45% 36% 13% 6%


How important are the following in shaping your social life?
Extremely important
Moderately important
Neutral
Not important
Academic major 83 302 304 346
Classes 104 446 347 138
Residence Halls 406 378 146 105
Extracurricular activities 406 403 151 75
Zoom events 154 842
Socioeconomic status 64 185 318 466
Race or ethnicity 210 277 486
Sexual orientation 179 256 551
Where you're from 214 316 463
Varsity athletics 140 111 113 668
Hobbies and Interests 313 542 131
Being an in-person learner vs. remote student 431 305 148 148
High school experience 225 342 433



View our full Zeitgeist findngs online at go/Zeitgeist

A year of missed and missing connections

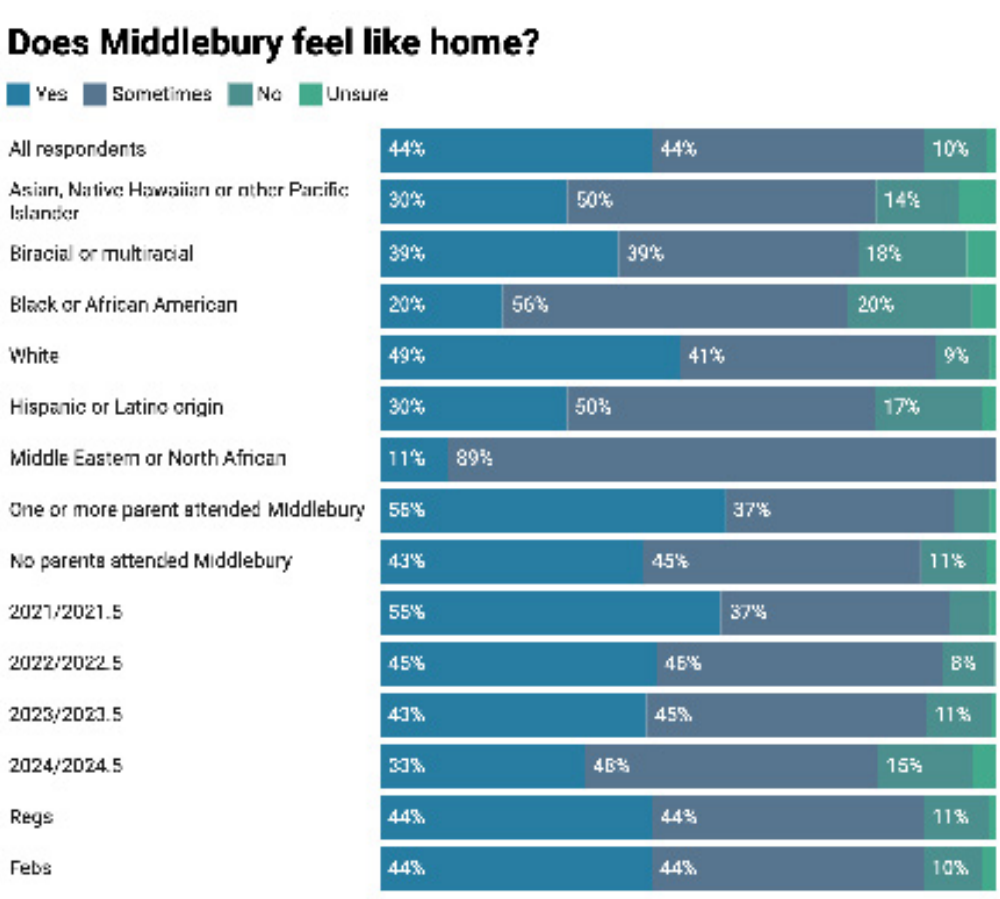
By TONY SJODIN
News Editor

Middlebury students have spent only a fraction of the last year on campus compared to pre-Covid semesters. They finished the spring 2020 semester online, returned to an abbreviated fall term or took classes remotely, and spent J-Term off-campus. Yet the time spent at Middlebury was spent in Middlebury — students developed a new awareness of the borders of Addison County as travel restrictions kept students near campus and isolated from the rest of the world. Life on campus changed too, with everything from social life to exercise altered by a long and evolving list of rules meant to keep Covid-19 prevalence in the community low.

The pandemic transformed college life, and alongside it, students' relationships with Middlebury. This year, we asked students whether Middlebury felt like home and how the ways they thought about Middlebury have changed since the beginning of the pandemic.

Does Middlebury feel like home?

Almost 90% of students said Middlebury at least sometimes feels like home, but there were significant disparities between how white students and students of color viewed Middlebury. While one in two white students said Middlebury felt like home, the same was true for only one in three Hispanic or Latino students, one in three Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander students, and one in five Black students. Black students said Middlebury did not feel like home more than twice as often as white students.


Does Middlebury feel like home?
Yes
Sometimes
No
Unsure
All respondents 44% 44% 10%
Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 30% 50% 14%
Biracial or multiracial 39% 39% 18%
Black or African American 20% 56% 20%
White 49% 41% 9%
Hispanic or Latino origin 30% 50% 17%
Middle Eastern or North African 11% 89%
One or more parent attended Middlebury 55% 37%
No parents attended Middlebury 43% 45% 11%
2021/2021.5 55% 37%
2022/2022.5 45% 45% 8%
2023/2023.5 43% 45% 11%
2024/2024.5 33% 48% 15%
Regs 44% 44% 11%
Febs 44% 44% 10%

Seniors felt far more at home at Middlebury than any other class year, with nearly 60% saying it was home and another 33% saying it was sometimes home. On the other side of the spectrum, first years were a notable standout — only 30% said Middlebury was home, while just over 50% said it sometimes was.

Legacy also made a difference in whether students felt at home at Middlebury. Students with two parents who went to Middlebury said they felt at home almost 25 percentage points more than students who had no parents attend Middlebury.

How has the way you think about Middlebury changed in the last year?

Respondents gave a mix of responses on how their thinking about Middlebury has changed, ranging from "I love it even more than I did before I got here," to "f*** this school."

Students wrote about how being sent away from Middlebury and later confined to Addison county changed their attach-

Continued online at middleburycampus.com

LOCAL

Sugaring gets a late start in Vermont due to cold weather
By EMILY HOGAN

Government and private grants support local Middlebury restaurants
By MAYA HEIKKINEN

ARTS & CULTURE

WRMC Radio Roundup: A Springtime Pastel Playlist
By the WRMC EXEC BOARD

Giants Have Us In Their Books: Spring's first faculty theater performance brings stories of change and growth
By EDYTH MOLDOW

OPINION

Let's stop to mourn what could have been
By the EDITORIAL BOARD

Why you can't get an A in anti-racism
By CONNOR WERTZ

Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it
By SEX PANTHER

SPORTS

This week in sports: Baseball, softball, tennis and golf
By NIAMH CARTY, CHARLES CROUNSE, SAM LIPIN, JOSH ROSENSTEIN & BLAISE SIEFER